



Lesley R. Maloney, PharmD

Everyone Loves a Good Story

Lesley learned very early in her career that a good story can be the key to having your message received. She describes how she used real-life stories and analogies to make her case, even using her experience shopping for a dining room table to set herself apart from other residency applicants.

Crafting a compelling and clear story is even more critical to Lesley R. Maloney in her current role as Senior Policy Advisor in the Office of the Commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). In this role she leads, develops, and coordinates public health regulatory policy for drugs, biologics, devices, and other public health issues. Lesley joined FDA in 2010 as an Industry Liaison in the Commissioner's Office, holding several progressively responsible positions, including Deputy Associate Commissioner for External Affairs and Deputy Chief of Staff. Lesley received her PharmD degree from the University of Oklahoma College of Pharmacy and completed the ASHP Executive Residency in Association Management and Leadership. Before joining FDA, she worked in the pharmaceutical industry, at a quality improvement organization on Medicare Part D, and at a professional pharmacy association.

Lesley's advice is: ***One of the most important stories you need to develop is your own. Everyone loves a good story, so be intentional about making yours great.***

 ***Dear Young Pharmacist,***

Everyone loves a good story. Whether you are sitting on the back porch with family, around a campfire with friends, or in the break room with work colleagues, stories provide a way for us to inspire, to educate, to remember, or to connect. I can't claim to be the kind of person who keeps people on the edge of their seats or doubled over in laughter. But, like a comedian rehearsing a joke in different

clubs until he perfects the punchline, I recognize the value in carefully crafting a message to optimize the impact on the audience. And now in my role as a Senior Policy Advisor in the Commissioner's Office at FDA, I construct "stories" to help the Agency identify and implement workable solutions to complex policy challenges.

My first lesson in professional storytelling occurred during college, when I worked as a small-town bank teller on the weekends. To streamline operations, the bank's policy was to shut down its internal computer network each Friday at closing time and reopen the network on Monday. Unfortunately, that policy resulted in weekend tellers, like me, providing only limited services to customers. It also meant our data lagged a day or two behind. In addition to being inconvenient for tellers, I thought the policy didn't meet our mission of excellent customer service and could potentially put the bank at risk because the data, such as account balances, weren't in real-time. Although everyone patiently explained that was "just the way it was," I was so blinded by youthful confidence that I requested permission to raise the issue to the bank president. I thought carefully about the background and key points I needed to make in my pitch and practiced these points out loud for several days. The bank president listened to my story and agreed with my reasoning. By the next weekend, we had full computer access in the bank drive-thru. This incident solidified my realization that a good story can influence change.

After completing an internship with ASHP, I knew I wanted to embark on a nontraditional pharmacy path, applying the knowledge I had gained in pharmacy school in the field of health policy. I decided to apply for ASHP's Executive Residency in Association Management and Leadership, and I knew I needed a letter of intent that would set me apart from the other candidates. I brainstormed for several weeks and finally decided to write about how choosing the ASHP residency was similar to shopping for my green dining room table. In my letter, I shared that when shopping for a table, I immediately fell in love with a green dining room table at the first store I visited. But, I made myself visit almost every other furniture store in town just to make sure I had found the perfect one, especially since this constituted one of the first big purchases on my own and my mother didn't think it was the most practical long-term decision. Similarly, health policy felt like a perfect fit as soon as I stepped through those ASHP doors, merging my passions about the vital role of pharmacists in healthcare with leadership and problem-solving. Yet, I knew I needed to explore the multitude of possibilities that the pharmacy profession offered in my various experiential rotations before making a decision on my future—just like shopping for my green table. Using an analogy of table shopping to outline my interest in the ASHP residency was a bit of a risk, but that story created the impact I needed. In fact, long after my residency ended, selection